



BDS on American College Campuses: 2013-14 Year-In-Review

Anti-Israel activity on American college campuses was largely dominated by Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns in the latest academic year. Student groups that are well-known for their outspoken opposition to Israeli policy advocated for a variety of BDS-related initiatives in an effort to isolate and delegitimize Israel.

The most prevalent BDS initiative on campus involved the introduction and debate of divestment resolutions by the campus's student government. Fifteen campuses experienced such resolutions in the 2013-14 academic year. In addition, two academic associations voted to boycott Israeli academic institutions and one school in South Florida circulated a petition to divest from Israel that reportedly received more than 10,000 signatures. Moreover, the vast majority of the approximately 400 explicitly anti-Israel events and programs that took place on college campuses this year focused on BDS as the best tactic available to dismantle the so-called "apartheid" state of Israel.

While weeklong programs like "Israeli Apartheid Week" and "Palestine Awareness Week" seem to have waned in popularity among anti-Israel students in recent years – as indicated by fewer schools participating and less general buzz around these programs – BDS initiatives are clearly on the upswing. A comparison from just one year earlier is startling. Eight college campuses considered BDS

resolutions in the 2012-13 academic year as opposed to fifteen, representing a nearly 100% increase in the tactic.

Although this data indicates a proliferation of BDS-related activity, it does not necessarily portend increased *success* for the BDS movement. Indeed, four of the resolutions passed in 2012-13 (50%) while only five passed this year (33%).

Perhaps more concerning, however, is the extent to which support for BDS has seeped into the realm of scholars. In 2013 resolutions calling for the boycott of Israeli academic institutions were passed by two academic associations, the American Studies Association and the Asian American Studies Association.

Divestment Resolutions and Referenda

Below is an alphabetically organized list of the universities that considered divestment resolutions or referendums this year, including the results of these votes:

- **Arizona State University:** Resolution was tabled indefinitely on March 18, 2014.
- **Cornell University:** Resolution was tabled indefinitely on April 10, 2014.
- **DePaul University:** A campus-wide referendum passed by a vote of 1,575-1,333 on May 23, 2014.
- **Loyola University:** Resolution failed on March 27, 2014. The March 26th vote was 12-10-9 in favor but was vetoed by the student government's president the following day.
- **San Diego State University:** Resolution failed by a vote of 3-16-3 on April 23, 2014.
- **University of California, Davis:** Resolution failed on May 8, 2014. The vote was 10-10 and the vice president, who had a potential tie-breaking vote, chose to abstain.

- **University of California, Los Angeles:** Resolution failed by a vote of 7-5 on February 26, 2014.
- **University of California, Riverside:** Resolution passed by a vote of 8-7-1 on April 23, 2014.
- **University of California, Santa Barbara:** Resolution failed by a vote of 8-16-0 on April 23, 2014.
- **University of California, Santa Cruz:** Resolution passed by a vote of 22-14 on May 27, 2014.
- **University of Michigan, Ann Arbor:** Resolution failed by a vote of 9-24-5 on March 25, 2014.
- **University of Michigan-Dearborn:** Resolution passed by a vote of 17-5 on March 28, 2014.
- **University of New Mexico:** Resolution failed on April 2nd, passed on April 10th and was then overturned by the Graduate and Professional Student Association on May 10, 2014.
- **University of Washington:** Resolution failed by a vote of 59-8 on May 20, 2014.
- **Wesleyan University:** Resolution passed on May 4, 2014 (numbers unknown).

Members of the pro-Israel community can take comfort in the fact that BDS efforts continue. When the ASA passed boycott its resolution, for example, more than 200 university presidents issued public statements denouncing the measures and distancing their universities from the results of these votes. More broadly, student-driven BDS resolutions cannot compel the university to alter its investments and are almost always summarily rejected by the university's administration as inconsistent with the university's policies.

ADL's Efforts to Counter BDS

- ADL trained students on how to lobby against divestment and present a pro-Israel viewpoint. ADL also provided students with factsheets, research and talking points about the BDS movement;
- ADL submitted letters to student senators who were considering divestment resolutions, urging them to vote against the resolutions because they only serve to deepen the divisions between Israelis and Palestinians and are counterproductive to the goals of peace;
- ADL encouraged university chancellors and administrators to speak out against divestment resolutions and assert that the campus in question will not entertain divestment;
- ADL issued public statements condemning divestment resolutions that had passed and praising university leaders for speaking out against them;
- ADL advised high-level university administrators about proactive measures to create a safe and comfortable campus environment for all students, reminding them that Jewish and pro-Israel students can feel isolated or intimidated by extreme anti-Israel narratives.

Despite the anti-Israel movement's increased efforts to advance BDS initiatives, members of the pro-Israel community can take comfort in the fact that BDS efforts continue to be roundly condemned and rejected by the American public and by university administrations.